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Briefer: Adam Ereli, Deputy Spokesman

QUESTION: Back to the thorny subject of secret prisons. The Secretary of State again was asked about this and she did her dance of the seven veils. Why can't we have just a straight answer whether these reports are true or false?

MR. ERELI: I guess it's not enough to look back at the daily transcripts of the last week to answer your question. You want it repeated?

QUESTION: They were not answered, is my point.

MR. ERELI: Pardon?

QUESTION: There's no straight answer.

MR. ERELI: The straight answer is I'm not going to comment on intelligence -- reports about intelligence.

QUESTION: Okay, then. What about the fact that she said the President doesn't support torture. Do we take it that the State Department supports John McCain's proposal not to exempt the CIA?

MR. ERELI: There's a statement of Administration policy on that issue that I would refer you to.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. ERELI: Yes. Go ahead.

QUESTION: On a new subject. Did the Secretary, when she was National Security Advisor, know of the existence of secret CIA prisons?

MR. ERELI: I don't have -- again, I told you I'm not going to comment on intelligence matters.

QUESTION: But -- but did she --

MR. ERELI: I'm not going to comment on intelligence matters.

QUESTION: Okay. Here's a follow-up to that then. The Secretary, when she's going abroad will no doubt, as she always does, try to further the President's freedom agenda.

MR. ERELI: Yes.

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QUESTION: She will be doing that with a great doubt over her about whether or not she supported a policy --

MR. ERELI: I disagree.

QUESTION: That restricts freedom.

MR. ERELI: I disagree.

QUESTION: You have not done anything to clear up the doubt.

MR. ERELI: I will tell you -- and the Secretary, I think, spoke very eloquently and forcefully to this issue yesterday in talking about the principles, values, and image of the United States throughout the world. And that is one where we state clearly what we believe in. We represent an example for the rest of the world and that example has proved, I think, beneficial to the development of freedom and democracy throughout the world as evidenced, as the Secretary said yesterday, in the changes that swept the Soviet Union in the final years of that system.

I think in looking forward to her upcoming travels, I would expect that the United States and the Secretary will find a very positive and favorable reception in -- certainly in Bahrain, certainly in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere to the United States freedom agenda, to the support that the United States has given reformers and democrats and people struggling for their rights and freedoms throughout the region and that what so consumes you here in this briefing will not adversely color our dealings on this trip.

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